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TO THE EDITOR

A 1964 hit song, done in an imitation Beach Boys' style, still sounds in my ears: "Summer Means Fun." Practically everyone in New Jersey loves easygoing days at the shore. Each year, we urge people to heed simple, yet potentially lifesaving, skin cancer prevention practices to keep their summers fun for years to come.

Years ago, people barely cared about sunburns. Now we know better. If youngsters or adolescents get a few bad sunburns, 15 to 20 years later they'll have a 30- to 40-times increased risk for developing melanoma or other types of skin cancer. Sunblocks of SPF 30 or higher are essential. So is lowered exposure. Fair-skinned people are more at risk, but melanoma can affect anyone.

At Allied Surgical Group, we treat skin cancers. Melanoma is the deadliest of them all. It can look like an oddly-shaped mole with jagged edges or be more than one color, or it can change in size over time. This year, about 62,500 melanomas will be found. They'll kill close to 8,500 people. Virtually all could have been saved by early detection and a simple treatment.

How do you protect your family? Choose lightweight fabrics, keeping plenty of skin covered. Avoid the intense rays of midday sun. And although they can be tempting, especially heading into prom season, tanning salons are a definite no.

Melanoma can show up anywhere, even between toes! Identify the moles on your skin to learn what's normal for you. Any changes, including moles that go away, should be examined by a doctor immediately.

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